

wetland matters



OXBOW, INC. NEWSLETTER

P. O. BOX 43391
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45243

Number 50 November - December 1994

Environmental Study

At a meeting August 10th Environmental Assessment Services delivered the final report on their study of the Oxbow Area. The report, in 2 volumes, is many hundreds of pages long. An executive summary provides a synopsis of the data presented in the report, makes recommendations for further research, and summarizes the legal and procedural implications of the information collected during the study. If you're interested in looking at the report, a copy will be available at upcoming Oxbow meetings.

David Armentrout and Margaret Witt, of Environmental Assessment Services, together with Donald Kaufman and Cecilia Berg, of Two Herons Consulting (the major sub-contractor for the project), summarized their findings by describing the Oxbow ecosystem as *unique* and *irreplaceable*. It is an ecosystem which is highly productive and supports a large variety of communities in a small area. The Oxbow, with its unique hydrology, is one-of-a-kind. Yes, it has interesting species (some never seen before) of plankton. Yes it has mollusks which, in Ohio, are species of "special concern." Yes, it plays an important role in the migration of huge numbers of waterfowl. Yes, it contains significant cultural resources with both prehistoric and historic sites of considerable archeological interest and potential. Yes, it may contain sacred sites of Native Americans. But what is most important, and what makes the Oxbow irreplaceable, is the complex interactions among these and countless other factors — interactions that have shaped the landscape and the living communities present in the area.

It is the complex web of interactions that makes plans to develop the wetlands worrisome. No one can predict what the effects of alterations would be, but it is certain that there would be repercussions following development. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that developers can create an artificial replacement wetland that has the many facets and features unique to the Oxbow.

The report points out (as most Oxbow, Inc. members already know) that the Oxbow ecosystem provides the benefits of wetlands to the surrounding area; it acts as a reservoir to slow flood waters, and purifies water as it recharges the aquifer from which many Dearborn County residents drink. The area

serves as an agricultural, recreational, and educational resource. These benefits are recognized as essential in the policies of the Army Corps of Engineers (who must issue permits before development in flood plains and wetlands can take place) and the Dearborn County Comprehensive Plan. Indeed, the Comprehensive Plan calls for the protection of natural areas which serve these important functions.

Oxbow, Inc. looks forward to sharing the information in the report with potential developers, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, the Indiana Gaming Commission, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The best way to protect the Oxbow is to ensure that everyone understands its importance and uniqueness.

At Recent Board Meetings

1) Connie McNamee was appointed to the board. She will head the marketing committee, and will be in charge of sales of Oxbow shirts, sweatshirts, videos, and books.

2) The board voted to accept a bid of the Hoosier Valley Survey Company for a survey of Oxbow's land. They will do research during October and the actual field work in November and December, after crops are out of the fields and the leaves are off the trees. The surveyors will be able to make any needed corrections to the Dearborn County Assessor's maps once the exact boundaries of Oxbow's land have been determined.

3) Board members Kani Meyer and Rick Pope are on a committee to promote the use of the Oxbow for educational purposes. They met with the educator and administrators from the Dearborn County Soil and Water Conservation District, toured the Oxbow area, and discussed how the Oxbow would fit in with the curriculum the SWCD is developing for local public schools.

Oxbow, Inc. has some funds to assist the visits of classes to the Oxbow area. Interested educators are encouraged to contact Kani and/or Rick for more information about visiting the Oxbow.

Field Notes

Morris Mercer

Autumn has come to the Oxbow. The soybeans are yellowing and other fields are brown with corn ready for harvest. The days are warm and the nights are cool. Memories of evening field trips of late summer come to mind. Each trip has been rewarding as I've shared them with so many nice people.

Many of these evenings were spent in the canoe. We put in at the Shawnee boat ramp and immediately paddle out the cut and across the river where we take advantage of the deeper water and the shade of the high bank. The bank has many holes — now abandoned and still — which earlier in the year were a hub of activity as a colony of Bank Swallows were busy raising their young.

The tops of the tall cottonwoods were losing their leaves, and many others were changing from green to yellow. A couple of Green Herons took off and flew into the willows across the river. Rough-winged Swallows wheeled and turned above the river, came down skimming the surface of the water. The Kingfisher gave its rattle call as it moved from a one dead branch to another farther upstream. We checked the high bank looking for the Kingfisher's nest hole, but couldn't find it, perhaps because much of the bank was hidden by cascades of green. Closed for the evening, we knew these Morning Glories would open with the morning sun.

It was along this bank that we noticed a wide, well-used path from the river up into the corn fields above us. We checked in the mud and found the large prints of Beaver. Several fair-sized trees had been cut by the beaver and some of the bark had been eaten. But that was a while ago. We figured that they'd eaten bark until the corn came on. Now these smart fellows moved up the bank for corn on the cob. Searching a bit, we found several holes in the bank that the Beaver had used as dens.

Large flocks of Grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds passed overhead. The fish were jumping and a Great Blue Heron took to the wing from a sandbar across the river. We saw flashing wings as half a dozen duck came out of a little cove, spooked as the canoe scraped the gravel in shallow water. We saw some more heron as they flew up-river.

The killdeer were noisy on the sandbar. As we neared the New Lost Bridge, twilight had come to the valley. A large section of bank had slipped down into the river. There were several good-sized trees still standing upright, but their feet were now very wet. The bank must have caved in during the early summer as the leaves were brown and most had fallen. I feel sure that an Osprey will use the tall, dead Sycamore to fish from this fall.

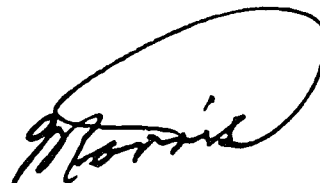
It's time to turn toward home, time to take it easy and let the current carry us. Through the willows and cottonwoods the last full moon of summer lights our way. The canoe runs silently and we are at peace with the world. In the western sky is a bright evening star.

Twilight soon gives way to night. We hear herons squawk as they move from the river bank. One evening, migrating Lesser Yellowlegs flew past us. We heard them calling all around, but didn't see one. There are other sounds as well, of insects such as katydids and crickets. Fish splash and swim from the canoe, perhaps feeling trapped by it in shallow water.

As we near the cut and the end of our trip, a slow-moving power boat turns in toward the boat ramp. A few minutes later the wake reaches us. The moonlight over the water and the approaching waves give the illusion of black satin in a gentle breeze. The canoe rocks slowly.

With night, a chill comes to the air and vapor rises from the warmer water. A light fog adds its mystery to the night. The trip soon ends. With the canoe loaded on the car, I head home up over Cliff Road, catching glimpses of the moon shimmering a silver path on the north bend of the beautiful Ohio.

I think of the many plans proposed by Casino developers for riverboat gambling on the Ohio. They speak of thousands of people rushing to lose their money in slot machines, at crap tables and roulette wheels. They speak about all the beautiful things they'll build — the glitter and the flashing signs. To me, all these pale in comparison with the moon over the river and a late summer evening in the land of the Oxbow.



Oxbow Memorials

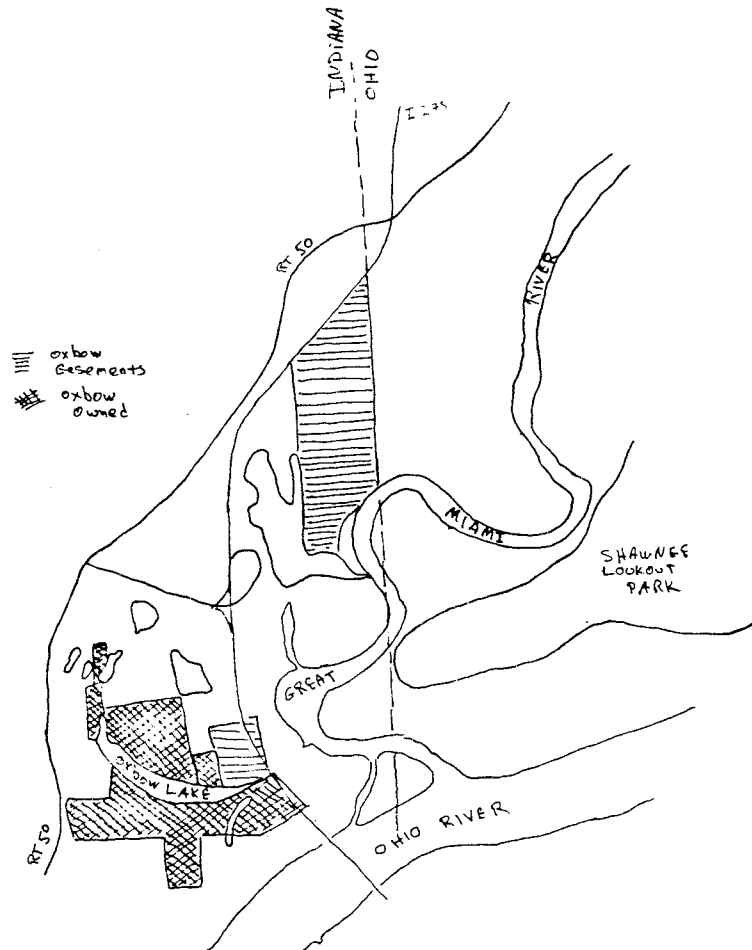
In Memory of

Samantha Angilecchia
 Leah F. Carr
 Julie Godsey -Remember
 Julie Godsey
 Edgar M. Hymans
 Sheeba Mootz
 Roseanna Rolfes
 Puck Rothman

Donor

Cheryl A. Winslow, D.V.M.
 Julie Riley and Jean Downie
 Norma L. Flannery
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 Albert E. Lane
 Cheryl A. Winslow, D.V.M.
 Ken Fulmer
 Cheryl A. Winslow, D.V.M.

Oxbow, Inc. has established memorials in honor of those who have passed on. Each memorial, established in the name of a friend or loved one, will be enrolled permanently in the records of the Corporation. Each contribution to a Memorial will be acknowledged to the family or to those selected by the donor. Contributions should be sent to Oxbow, Inc., P.O. Box 43391, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45243-0391. Be sure to include the names and addresses of those to receive the acknowledgment.



Calendar

Meetings

8 November (Tuesday) 7:30 P.M. Oxbow meeting at the Cincinnati Zoo Education Building. (Enter through the exit gate on Erkenbrecher Avenue.)

Bea Orendorff, the founder and director of the Tri-State Wildlife Center, will give this evening's program. She'll describe the process of wildlife rehabilitation and fill us in on the Center's activities. Bea said to expect a "surprise guest" at the program.

13 December (Tuesday) 7:30 P.M. Oxbow meeting at the Lawrenceburg Public Library. (From Cincinnati, turn left of U.S. 50 onto Walnut Street. Turn right onto High Street. The library is on the right side of High Street.)

John Homer gave a very informative talk about Fernald at a recent Cincinnati meeting and has agreed to give a similar program in Lawrenceburg. John is an expert on the studies of natural history that have been done as part of formulating a plan of action to clean up the Fernald site. He will also give us an overview of the entire restoration process. You shouldn't miss this program; everyone left John's Cincinnati program better informed about what's happening at Fernald.

18 November (Friday) 7:30 P.M. Gilmore Ponds Conservancy Annual Meeting at Winton Centre.

The fourth annual public meeting of the Gilmore Ponds Conservancy will take place at the Winton Centre, Winton Woods Park. The speaker will be Bill Creasy from the Cincinnati Nature Center. Other features of the evening will include refreshments and a children's corner. Admission is free, but you'll need a Hamilton County Parks motor vehicle permit. For more information, call (513)-868-9009.

For those who don't know: Gilmore Ponds Conservancy is the tri-state's other wetland preservation organization. Working closely with Butler County, they have been very successful at protecting the Gilmore Ponds wetland. Come to their annual meeting, learn of their progress, enjoy the program, and meet other people concerned about wetland conservation.

Field Trips

26 November (Saturday) 9:00 AM. Oxbow field trip.

We'll meet at the Shawnee Park boat ramp parking lot for a close look at the water's edge and then head up the hill for a more panoramic view of the flood plain. You'll need a HCPD motor vehicle permit. For more information, call Steve Pelikan (513)-681-2574

For a December field trip, we'll attend the area's Christmas Bird Counts. Everyone is invited to participate in these tallies. The name and phone number of the count organizers are given. Call them for the meeting time and place of the counts you're interested in attending.

17 December (Saturday) Ohio River CBC.

Joe Bens (513)-221-1835

18 December (Sunday) Western Hamilton County CBC.

Ned Keller (513)-941-6497(Home)
(513)-385-9080(Work)

26 December (Monday) Cincinnati CBC.

Jay Stenger (513)-522-4245(Home)
(513)-522-8147(Work)

31 December (Saturday) East Fork CBC.

Joe Bens (513)-221-1835

Waterfowl Hunting Season

The waterfowl hunting season in the Ohio River Zone of Indiana (which encompasses the entire Oxbow area) will be November 25-27 and December 10-January 15 for ducks, coots and mergansers. For Geese the season is November 23 - January 31.

In the Ohio River Zone of the State of Ohio, the duck, coot and merganser season is October 15-23 and December 16 - January 15. The season for geese is October 15-23 and November 19-January 18.

The extended season in Ohio has been attributed to elevated duck populations, reported to be the highest they've been in over a decade.

In Ohio, hunters are limited to 3 ducks each day, 5 mergansers (only one of which may be a Hooded Merganser) each day, and 15 Coots each day. For the first time since the early 1980's it will be legal to hunt Canvasback in Ohio (with a limit of one each day).

Walking Cincinnati

by Darcy and Robert Folzenlogen

A second edition of *Walking Cincinnati* was published in 1993. You've seen ads. for it in places such as Oxbow's Wetland Matters and the Sierra Club's newsletter. This is because the spirit of the book is closely aligned with the goals of such organizations: appreciation of and participation in the out-of-doors, preservation and conservation. People protect what they enjoy, and the Folzenlogens provide enough information that readers can enjoy many of the tri-state's parks, neighborhoods, and wild areas by visiting them on self-guided walking tours.

The book describes 59 hikes in the Cincinnati area. The walks vary in length from very short to about 5 miles. None of the walks seem strenuous. Almost all of them could be completed in a morning or part of an afternoon. The descriptions of the walks don't emphasize covering ground as much as understanding and appreciating what you encounter along the way. Some of the urban walks emphasize historical buildings, distinctive architecture, and neighborhoods with an interesting history. Many of the walks through parks highlight interesting bits of ecology and natural history.

Each walk is described (the directions seem accurate and up to date) and accompanied by a photograph and a map. Walk number 26 — The Oxbow — describes both the "cement plant" and "lumber yard" entrances to the area, gives a realistic picture of the state of the farm roads in the area, mentions many highlights of the floodplain, such as birds, mammals, and plant communities that can be observed, alludes to the unique hydrology of the area, and mentions Oxbow, Inc. as an organization worthy of support by visitors who enjoy the area.

This book would be an ideal gift for someone whose New Year's resolutions include "getting out more" or "getting more exercise." It would also be a thoughtful present for a neighbor or co-worker who is new to the Cincinnati area. Indeed, there's enough fun things to do and see in *Walking Cincinnati* that you'd be pleased if someone gave you a copy of the book!

Gift Suggestions

What do you give to the woman or man who has everything? You could always renew her (or his) **Membership in Oxbow, Inc.** You'd have the option of having the gift announced in *Wetland Matters*.

A variety of **shirts** are available from Oxbow. These include shirts with the caption "The Duck Stops Here" and a Wood Duck illustration by Charlie Harper as well as a variety of Oxbow Birdathon T-shirts with designs by Fritz Haas.

Then again, there's **Birds of the Oxbow** — the video produced by Impact Video, and the book *Birds of the Oxbow*, David Styer's account of birdlife at the mouth of the Great Miami River.

Most of these items can be had (and all can be ordered) at any meeting of Oxbow, Inc.

Riverboat Update

Things are progressing more slowly than originally planned. The Indiana Gaming Commission will not even schedule public hearings in Dearborn County before early 1995. Courts are still in the process of deciding the legality of the law and election procedures for allowing gambling in Indiana.

One gaming developer has filed an application to develop in the flood plain with the Army Corps of Engineers. Oxbow, Inc. has forwarded a petition to the Corps with at least 25 signatures (collected at Oxbow's October meeting held at the Larwenceburg library) requesting that they hold public hearings as part of their consideration of the proposal. It is at such public hearings that Oxbow members and other concerned citizens can express their concerns about development in wetlands. You can learn the dates and locations of such meeting from *Wetland Matters*.

SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFER FOR OXBOW MEMBERS

WALKING CINCINNATI (2ND EDITION)..\$12.95

HIKING OHIO.....\$12.95

Great Gifts for Outdoor People

Now order **both** guides for only **\$20.00** (no shipping).

Send check and copy of this ad to **Willow Press**,
6053 S. Platte Canyon Rd., Littleton, CO 80123

Offer expires December 31, 1994

Oxbow, Inc.

A nonprofit organization formed by conservation groups and concerned citizens of Ohio and Indiana for the purpose of preserving and protecting a wetlands ecosystem known locally as the Oxbow, Hardintown, or Horseshoe Bottoms, from industrial development and to preserve the floodplain at the confluence of the Great Miami and Ohio rivers for use as a staging area for the seasonal migrations of waterfowl. This agricultural is rich in geological, archaeological, and anthropological history.

Help us save this unique wetland ecosystem. Make your state a richer place in which to live by helping us preserve this precious resource. Membership in Oxbow, Inc. is encouraged and solicited.

Individual	\$10	Family	\$15
Contributing	\$25	Supporting	\$50
Patron	\$100	Cornerstone	\$250
Sponsor	\$500	Benefactor	\$1000
Organization/Club	\$25		

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Recording Secretary,
Dennis Mason (513) 385-3607
Corresponding Secretary,
Suzanne Skidmore (513) 561-5718
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